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E S S A Y S

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ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS

OF

TASTE AND CRITICISM.

SCILICET INGENUAS DIDICISSE FIDELITER ARTES,
EMOLLIT MORES, NEC SINIT ESSE FEROS.

Ov.

L O N D O N:

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P R E F A C E.

THERE is no branch of science which so happily combines the two great ends of utility and pleasure, as the art of rational criticism : there truth and beauty appear united, and by their union reflect additional lustre on each other.

The study of rational criticism is no less calculated to promote the innocent amusements and pleasures of life, than the more serious objects of science and philosophy ; and if the intellectual faculties are improved by such speculations, it might be shewn that they have no less tendency to
refine

vi P R E F A C E.

refine the manners, and to humanize the temper. A correct taste, and delicate feelings, are qualities very friendly to the exercise of the social and benevolent affections; nor have they less connection with the moral character, and the devotional taste. Upon the whole, a taste for the beauties of nature and of art ought to be regarded as the handmaid of Virtue; and Criticism should be grounded on the unerring principles of Taste.

This maxim the author has endeavoured to exemplify in the following pages; which are submitted to the public inspection with all the diffidence that is due before so respectable a tribunal, and with all the anxiety

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anxiety that is natural to a young candidate for literary fame.

The author is not conscious of having advanced any sentiment or opinion which may not be deduced from some general principle of taste or criticism; he has not the vanity however to think himself exempted from errors and mistakes.

Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see,
Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be.

Excellence in the walk of criticism requires such a combination of talents as seldom falls to the lot of any one individual: critics of sound judgment and humanity will therefore make many allowances for the
first

first attempts of a juvenile writer, in an art wherein perfection is universally allowed to be a rare and difficult attainment.

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Whoever thinks a subject piece to be
I think what he or was not is not to be

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GENERAL

GENERAL REMARKS
ON THE
NATURE, ORIGIN, AND PROGRESS
OF
POETICAL COMPOSITION.

SIC HONOR ET NOMEN DIVINIS VATIBUS ATQUE
CARMINIBUS VENIT. *Hor.*

*The excellence of the Poetical Art.—Compared
in its effects with Eloquence, Music, and
Painting.—The nature and origin of Poetry.
—Critical remarks on some passages of Sacred
Poetry.*

THERE are no compositions so uni-
versally pleasing as those of the poe-
tical kind, being no less the delight
of the rudest and most uncultivated parts of
mankind, than of the most civilized and re-
fined. The most illiterate tribes*, whose lives

* Sunt illis hæc quoque carmina, quorum relatu, quem
Barditum vocant, accendunt animos, futuræque pugnae for-
tunam ipso cantu augurantur. *Tacit. de Morib. German.*

B

are

are divided between war and the chase, have their Bards or Poets, who, by the force of song, "soothe the savage breast," or rouse them to martial ardour. Among those nations or tribes who live by pasture, Poetry assumes a more gentle form; it is then chiefly employed in painting the beauties of nature, describing the charms of the fair, and representing all the vicissitudes of love. And in the more advanced periods of civil society, this delightful art, while it promotes the pleasures of imagination, is also made subservient to the purposes of moral improvement; and becomes a source of the most rational entertainments, and refined pleasures of life. But not to expatiate further on so very trite a subject, I would observe, that of all the imitative arts, as they are called, Poetry may be reckoned the most excellent.

It is not only superior to Painting in several respects—but combines the charms of Eloquence and Music. The harmony of verse raises emotions in the mind similar to those which are communicated by means of the latter*; and Poetry is enabled to produce

* "Music," as an elegant writer observes, "never appears to the best advantage but with Poetry for its interpreter."

effects similar to those of Eloquence—by the beauty and sublimity of description—the force of imagery—and by all those movements of the passions which constitute the perfection of Oratory.

It was remarked, “that Poetry is superior to Painting in several respects.”—This will require some illustration.

Poetry can express many thoughts and sentiments—many secret agitations of the soul, which the most masterly pencil is unable to convey. A Painter might delineate the combat of the Horatii and the Curiatii, so as to give a very adequate representation of the several parties concerned;—but could he, by the utmost efforts of his art, convey to the mind the various emotions of anxiety, hope, despair, and joy, which must alternately have agitated the breasts of the Romans and Albans during the engagement, and at the issue of that important contest? A Painter might give an affecting representation of the parting of Hector and Andromache; but it is Homer alone that can make us tremble and weep. So also two parting lovers might be placed in very sorrowful and moving attitudes; but no representation on

canvas could ever melt the heart like these pathetic lines of Virgil :

Phyllida amo ante alias ; nam me discedere flevit ;
Et, longum formosæ vale, vale, inquit, Iola.

Ecl. III.

The death of Euryalus, and the generous interposition of his friend Nifus, might afford excellent scope for the genius of a Painter ;—but could the highest touches of the pencil convey those exquisite emotions which every reader of sensibility must feel from the following exclamation of Nifus, upon observing the sword of Volscens unsheathed against Euryalus ?

Me—me (adsum qui feci) in me convertite ferrum,
O Rutuli, mea fraus omnis ; nil iste neque ausus,
Nec potuit : cælum hoc et conscia sidera testor.
Tantum infelicem nimium dilexit amicum.

Lib. ix. line 427.

Further, it might be shewn, that the Poet can describe several qualities which Painting cannot represent, or at least very imperfectly ; and thus he is able to interest us more strongly in his characters. The Painter can delineate the external qualities of beauty and youth, gravity, majesty, and sweetness : the Poet can do all this, and
much

much more; he can trace those inward workings of the soul, which express themselves in the countenance; he can penetrate into the inmost recesses of mental operations, as well as mark their effects. The Poet can work more effectually on our moral feelings than the Painter; he can set before us the great virtues of prudence and justice, temperance and fortitude, and engage us more forcibly to the practice of them. It also belongs to the Poet to display in their full force and beauty the gentle and amiable virtues of benevolence—humanity, sympathy, generosity, and friendship, from which the outward form derives all its powers of pleasing.

I am happy to find myself supported in these remarks by a writer of ingenuity and taste. “ The descriptive powers of Painting are subject to many limitations; it cannot mark the progress of action or thought, because it exhibits the event of one instant of time; nor has it any expression for intellectual motions, nor for those calmer affections of the soul, that produce no visible change on the body. But Poetry can describe every energy of

“ mind, and phenomenon of matter; and
 “ every variety, however minute, of cha-
 “ racter, sentiment, and passion, as it ap-
 “ pears in each period of its progress; and
 “ innumerable combinations, both of sub-
 “ lime and of ludicrous ideas, there are,
 “ which the pencil cannot trace out, but
 “ which are easily conveyed to the mind by
 “ speech or writing *.” The same ingeni-
 ous writer observes, however, that Painting
 is more lively in description than Poetry,
 and, by presenting a whole composition to
 the eye at once, may strike the mind with a
 more diversified and more emphatic im-
 pulse.

Granting this observation to be true, as it
 most certainly is, since, according to what our
 author further observes—“ we apprehend
 “ more easily what we see, than what we
 “ only conceive from narration”—yet even
 here, it must be allowed, that Poetry has
 furnished the noblest materials both for the
 Painter and Sculptor to work upon; or, as
 Philostratus observes, that the expressions of
 Poets are made visible by Painters. We are

* Beattie's Essay on Poetry and Music, p. 355, 356.

told,

told, that Polygnotus was indebted to Homer for some of his finest pieces; and Phidias confessed, that the hint of his Olympian Jupiter was taken from the sublime description which Homer gives of that deity in the first book of the Iliad. Mr. Pope's translation of that passage, which is by no means inferior to the original, it is presumed, will not be unacceptable to the reader.

——He spoke, and awful bends his sable brows,
Shakes his ambrosial curls, and gives the nod,
The stamp of fate, and sanction of the God :
High heav'n with trembling the dread signal took,
And all Olympus to the center shook.

The following inimitable description of Mount *Ætna*, by the Mantuan Poet, would afford ample scope for a Painter of genius to work upon, though he had never seen the archetype.

*Sed horrificis juxta tonat Aetna ruinis.
Interdumque atram prorumpit ad æthera nubem,
Turbine fumantem piceo, et candente favilla :
Attollitque globos flammaram et sidera lambit :
Interdum scopulos avulsaque viscera montis
Erigit eructans liquefactaque saxa sub auras
Cum gemitu glomerat, fundoque exæstuat imo *.*

* *Æneid. Lib. III. 572—579*

What a noble subject for the pencil does the same Poet give, in that admirable but well-known description of Æneas, in the first book of the Æneid. No translation can convey the native force and beauty of the original.

*Restitit Æneas, claraque in luce refulsit,
Os, humerosque deo similis : namque ipsa decoram
Cæsariem nato genetrix, lumenque juventæ
Purpureum, et lætos oculis afflârat honores.
Quale manus addunt ebori decus, aut ubi flavo
Argentum Pariusve lapis circumdatur auro *.*

One example more, and I shall have done : it is that sublime description of the horse which we have in the book of Job.

*Haft thou given the horse strength ? hast thou clothed
his neck with thunder ?
Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper ? the
glory of his nostrils is terrible.
He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength :
he goeth on to meet the armed men.
He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted ; neither
turneth he back from the sword.
The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear
and the shield.
He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage ;*

* Lib. I. 592—597.

neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet.

He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting *.

What a variety of embellishing circumstances might a Painter draw from this description!—but the best representation of that noble animal on canvas could never raise such sublime emotions, as every reader of taste must feel from the above incomparable passage of sacred Poetry.

Thus having shewn the excellence of Poetry, and illustrated its superiority to Painting, in description, sentiment, and passion, we proceed to offer a few reflections concerning the origin of the Poetical Art.

I agree with a very profound writer †, “ That we can affirm nothing positively concerning the origin of Poetry.” Indeed, if we consider Poetry, not as the artificial mechanism of measure and rhyme, but as the language of passion and strong emotion, we may reasonably suppose, that it is as ancient

* Job, xxxix. 19—25.

† Goguet.

as man himself. I am inclined to think, that the Supreme Being was the first subject of Poetry *. It is highly probable, that the first inhabitants of the earth chiefly employed their leisure hours in expressions of praise and gratitude to the great Creator of the universe; and in celebrating that power, wisdom, and goodness, which are so conspicuous in all his works.

What more natural object of contemplation to our first parents, and their immediate descendants, than that Supreme Being to whom they owed their existence and happiness? and what object so fitted to raise in the mind emotions of grandeur, sublimity, and beauty, together with sentiments of gratitude and love—those great sources of poetic inspiration—which give birth to lofty epithets, bold imagery, and those modes of expression that are peculiar to Poetry?

The sacred historian, consistently with

* This is M. Rollin's opinion:—though we cannot agree with that elegant writer, in making the Supreme Being the only subject of genuine Poetry—in considering every other subject of poetical composition as a deviation from its original design—and that the purity and dignity of the art is debased by any other object—excepting God.

that

that noble simplicity which distinguishes his writings, does not expatiate upon the employments of our first parents in the garden of Eden : we learn from him, that they were innocent and happy—and is it not reasonable to suppose, that the chief part of their happiness would consist in exercises of praise, adoration, and gratitude, to their Creator ?

For neither various stile
Nor holy rapture wanted they, to praise
Their Maker, in fit strains pronounc'd, or sung
Unmeditated, such prompt eloquence
Flow'd from their lips, in prose or numerous verse,
More tuneable than needed lute or harp
To add more sweetness *.

To drop this hypothetical reasoning : Whatever may have been the original source of Poetry, there is no doubt, that among all nations poetical compositions were prior to any other—that the rudest and most uncivilized tribes of mankind have their Poets—and that there are certain common properties, which may be discerned in the Poetry of early ages, however opposite the genius and spirit of the people, or however different the

* Milt. Parad. Lost, B. v. 146—152.

objects of their poetical compositions. It would be in vain therefore to think of tracing the origin of an art which is coeval with the human race. Poetry had its source in the imagination, which, when strongly affected with the emotions of novelty, beauty, and grandeur—the affections of gratitude, love, and devotion—would adopt elevated language—bold figures, and lively imagery—to convey, if possible, the beauty and grandeur of objects to the expressions that represented them, and to render the height of emotion and passion visible (so to say) through the medium of language. These characters may be discerned in the Poetry of early ages, and they were all prior to the artificial mechanism of verse.

The most ancient pieces of Poetry with which we are acquainted, are to be found in the Hebrew writings. Originality, and vast sublimity of thought—a most affecting tenderness of passion, set forth in the utmost simplicity of expression—are the distinguishing characteristics of those divine poems; and not to allow their manifest superiority in these respects to the most admired productions of ancient Greece and Rome,

Rome, would argue either great want of taste, or the grossest prejudices. Besides, it must be observed, that those characters are preserved, to a surprising degree, through the medium of a literal translation, a garb in which the finest passages of the Greek and Roman classics lose most of their native beauties.

The prophetic address of Jacob to his sons on his death-bed, is highly poetical; the style is bold, nervous, and figurative*.

The sublimest piece of Hebrew Poetry we have, is the Song † of Moses, which was composed in gratitude to God for the deliverance of the Israelites from the hands of the Egyptians. M. Rollin, in his excellent Critique on the Song of Moses, gives it as his opinion, that neither Virgil nor Horace, though the most perfect models of poetical eloquence, have ever written any thing comparable to it; and having alluded to similar passages in the former, which, though vastly fine, appeared grovelling to him in comparison with the Song in question, he subjoins, “Virgil, methinks, is all ice; Moses
“all fire.”

* Genesis xlix.

† Exodus xv.

The emotions of praise, gratitude, and joy, are expressed in the following verses in all the grandeur of poetic diction:

I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation.

He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.

The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is his name.

Pharaoh's chariots and his hosts hath he cast into the sea.

Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power; thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.

What sublime and awful conceptions of the power of the Almighty, and the effects of his vengeance, does the Poet convey in the following passage!

In the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble: And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together; the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.

How beautifully are the rage, arrogance,
and

and confidence of the Egyptians opposed to the effects of Almighty power, in the following verses !

The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them.

Thou didst blow with thy wind; the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.

What a grand conception is conveyed to us of the God of Israel in the following verse !

Who is like unto thee, O Lord, amongst the Gods ? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders * ?

The last address of Moses to the Israelites—the Song of Deborah—and many parts of the book of Job, are all in the same sublime strain of Poetry; and that animated collection, called the Book of Psalms, contains many admirable pieces in the true spirit of Poetry.

* The reader is referred, for a more minute explication of the Song of Moses, to M. Rollin; who, in his “Method of teaching and studying the Belles Lettres,” has unfolded, with peculiar elegance and taste, all the beauties of that incomparable piece.

A great uniformity may be remarked in the poetical compositions of all rude nations, as they are called ; they are not confined to rhyme or measure, but loose and unconnected—animated, and abounding in tropes and figures. They consist chiefly of strains of gratitude to their deceased heroes and warriors—or celebrate the praises of those living heroes who are most distinguished by their activity and perseverance in the chase, or by their courage, resolution, and fortitude in war. Hunting and war are the chief employments of rude nations, and those of course become the chief subjects of their poetical compositions—such are the poems of the celebrated Ossian. The passion of love does not acquire a very powerful dominion over the heart, till men have emerged from the state of ferocity and war ; nor have they any leisure or relish for the beauties of nature, till they have begun to lead quiet and peaceful lives, and to tend their flocks.—But this leads us to that species of poetical composition called Pastoral, which shall be the subject of the following speculation.

On

On PASTORAL POETRY.

Origin of Pastoral—sources of the pleasures received from this species of Poetry.—General attachment to a country life—foundation of this attachment.

WE are not to look for the origin of Pastoral Poetry in those periods of society when men lived like beasts of prey, and were perpetually engaged in wars and bloodshed: the breast of a fierce and haughty barbarian cannot be very susceptible of those delightful emotions that result from contemplating the beauties of nature, nor of those tender and refined feelings which virtuous love inspires. Society then must have assumed a regular form—men must have acquired some relish for still-life—rural employments and diversions, and the fair sex become objects of respectful attention, before we can expect any productions of the pastoral kind.

There is no sort of Poetry more pleasing
C than

than pastoral ;—the objects which it represents—the grand and beautiful scenes of nature, together with the amusements and innocent passions of rural life, are highly delightful to most people ; and pastoral writers never fail to add every embellishing circumstance to the former, and carefully to remove from the latter every idea that might give their readers pain or disgust. They represent to us a state of life where no turbulent or malevolent passions are to be found ; but where peace, harmony, and benevolence ever reign ; and where every passion in human nature is made subservient to the gentle emotions of love. The Poets make all the happiness of their enraptured swains to center in the smiles of the fair : it is the charms of the shepherdesses that give life and beauty to inanimate objects : their presence adds lustre to the sun, and makes all nature smile ; but in their absence, the groves appear no longer gay ; the flowers droop their heads, and the hearts of the shepherds are sad. In short, love is the principal hinge upon which all pastorals turn ; and therefore, its hopes and fears, its anxieties

anxieties and despairs, its jealousies and pleasing torments, must make a capital figure in this kind of poetry. Hence the foundation of those pleasures that are so generally received from pastoral.——But how do you account for those peculiar notions of happiness which most people have connected with a country life? The foundation of this attachment might be traced in the following manner :—In the pastoral state, the objects of pursuit are such as neither greatly fatigue the body, nor depress the spirits, but give that gentle exercise to the whole frame, which promotes health and cheerfulness. There innocence, harmony, and love are ever supposed to reign, free from all that corruption, dissimulation, and strife, which prevail in large cities—and there we expect that ease and tranquillity, which all men, even the most bustling, flatter themselves they are one day to enjoy ;—and we may observe also, that a country life affords that solitude, in which the love-sick mind so much delights.—Rural scenes and amusements are peculiarly pleasing to those who are under the influence of love ;—and this seems to be

the reason why young Poets so much indulge the pastoral Muse—and why young persons in general are so fond of reading poems of this sort.

But, whatever be the sources of our attachment to a rural life, we may appeal for the reality of it to the common feelings of mankind. This attachment is certainly founded in human nature;—nor will it affect the truth of our maxim, that there are some whose minds have been so much depraved by artificial refinements, as to have lost all relish for the simplicity of nature—and others who have been so corrupted by vicious gratifications, as to ridicule the very notion of virtuous attachment—“and to “ have no relish for pleasures that are not “ criminal.”

Our first parents, during their innocence, lived in a state of rural simplicity; they are said to have been placed in a garden, where, according to the words of the sacred historian, “grew every tree that was pleasant to “ the sight, and good for food:” we may easily conceive, that Nature would have lavished her beauties on that happy spot, and adorned

adorned it with all that could gratify the senses, or delight the imagination. The beauties of this garden are described by Milton with all the luxuriance of a poetic imagination. The passage is so very fine, that I am persuaded the reader will not be displeased with the length of it.

Thus was this place

A happy rural seat of various view :

Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm :

Others whose fruit, burnish'd with golden rind,

Hung amiable, Hesperian fables true,

If true, heré only, and of delicious taste :

Betwixt them lawns, or level downs, and flocks

Grazing the tender herb, were interpos'd,

Or palmy hillock : or the flow'ry lap

Of some irriguous valley spread her store,

Flów'rs of all hue, and without thorn the rose.

Another side, umbrageous grots and caves,

Or cool recess, o'er which the mantling vine

Lays forth her purple grape, and gently creeps

Luxuriant : mean while, murm'ring waters fall

Down the slope hills, dispers'd, or in a lake,

That to the fringed bank, with myrtle crown'd,

Her crystal mirror holds, unite their streams.

The birds their quire apply ; airs, vernal airs,

Breathing the smell of field and groves, attune

The trembling leaves, while universal Pan,

Knit with the Graces, and the Hours in dance,
Led on th' eternal spring.

Parad. Lost, B. iv.

We may suppose our first parents to have been endued with an exquisite taste for the beauties of nature, and to have enjoyed all those pleasures which the tenderest love could inspire: the inimitable Milton sets forth their happiness in the most agreeable strains of poetry—and I cannot help quoting the whole passage, as being written in the true spirit of pastoral, and breathing all the simplicity, tenderness, and sweetness of the Doric Muse.

Eve thus addresses Adam :

With thee conversing I forget all time,
All seasons, and their change ; all please alike :
Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,
With charm of earliest birds ; pleasant the sun,
When first on this delightful land he spreads
His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flow'r
Glitt'ring with dew ; fragrant the fertile earth
After soft showers ; and sweet the coming on
Of grateful evening mild ; then silent night,
With this her solemn bird, and this fair moon,
And these the gems of heaven, her starry train.
But neither breath of morn, when she ascends

With

With charm of earliest birds ; nor rising sun
 On this delightful land ; nor herb, fruit, flow'r
 Glitt'ring with dew ; nor fragrance after show'rs ;
 Nor grateful evening mild ; nor silent night,
 With this her solemn bird ; nor walk by moon,
 Or glitt'ring star-light, without thee is sweet.

Book iv. 641—656.

The prophet Isaiah, when he foretels the coming of our Saviour, makes use of pastoral allusions, and rural images, to represent the felicities attending that event, and the glories of the Christian kingdom : and Virgil, in that sublime Eclogue, entitled Pollio, wherein he celebrates the birth of young Marcellus, and sets forth the happiness of that period, conducts his readers, not to triumphal pomps, shows, and entertainments, but to the tranquil scenes of rural life ; and represents the whole world as returning to the primeval state of pastoral simplicity.

How beautifully does the same enchanting Poet describe the happiness of a country life, in the following lines from the second Georgic!

O Fortunatos nimium, sua si bona nôrint,
 Agricolas ! quibus ipsa procul discordibus armis,

C 4

Fundit

Fundit humo facilem victum justissima tellus.
 Si non ingentem foribus domus alta superbis
 Mane salutantum totis vomit ædibus undam ;
 Nec varios inhiant pulchrâ testudine postes,
 Illusasque auro vestes, Ephyreiaque æra ;
 Alba neque Assyrio fucatur lana veneno ;
 Nec casia liquidi corrumpitur usus olivi :
 At secura quies, et nescia fallere vita,
 Dives opum variarum ; at latis otia fundis,
 Speluncæ, vivique lacus ; at frigida Tempe,
 Mugitusque boum, mollesque sub arbore somni
 Non absunt. Illic saltus, ac lustra ferarum,
 Et patiens operum, parvoque assueta juvenus ;
 Sacra Deum, sanctique patres ; extrema per illos
 Justitia excedens terris vestigia fecit.

The pictures which the Poets give of the Golden-age are all in the same strain ; and, according to them, the Iron-age came on when men left the happy simplicity of Nature, and exchanged the peace and tranquillity of pastoral life for the noise and bustle, dissimulation and wickedness, that prevail in large cities ; when, not contented with the fruits of their own climate, men began to ransack the globe for various delicacies, to supply the wants of luxury ; in short, when riches and power became the chief objects of pursuit—when ancient hospitality and friendship

friendship gave way to selfishness and distrust—and when virtuous love was prostituted at the shrine of avarice.

To give a summary view of the whole :—
Pastoral is more generally pleasing than any other species of Poetry, because the objects which it represents—the scenes, manners, and passions of rural life—are in themselves highly delightful. The general attachment to this sort of life might be accounted for, from its tendency to gratify men's natural desires of ease and tranquillity, to excite and cherish the emotions of virtuous love. Most people connect the pleasures of rural life with their notions of happiness—an evident proof that our attachments to the former are founded in the constitution of our nature.

The

The subject continued.—Definition of Pastoral Poetry.—Critical remarks on some ancient and modern writers of Pastoral.

IT is remarked by Mr. Pope, “ that
 “ there are not a greater number of any
 “ sort of verses, than of those which are
 “ called Pastorals; nor a smaller, than of
 “ those which are truly so.” Indeed, there
 is no species of Poetry more difficult to execute, notwithstanding the objects of imitation are so obvious. A Pastoral Poem requires the greatest simplicity in the fable, the sentiments, and language; without which it cannot be called a just imitation of nature: but simplicity is the chief excellence of fine writing, and a quality which we seldom or never find in ordinary Poets.

Further, the critics have laid it down as an essential rule, that Pastoral should take its ideas from those times of tranquillity, love, and innocence, which Poets call the Golden-age:—but it will be found no easy matter for a Poet, born in a refined period

riod of society, and having no ideas of the pastoral life except what he has derived from books, to adhere uniformly to the manners of those primitive times.

Both Dryden and Pope have defined Pastoral, "an imitation of the action of a shepherd." This definition appears too limited, for it excludes all ideas relating to tillage and planting, which may, with propriety, be introduced into a poem of this sort. Pastoral Poetry might therefore be more justly defined "*A representation of the employments, diversions, and passions of rural life.*" It must be observed, however, that in order to render this representation delightful, modern Poets are not to describe shepherds and ploughmen, as they are at this day, but as they are supposed to have been in the early ages of the world, when those employments were so much respected. But it is not to those ages of rural simplicity that we are indebted for the first regular compositions of the pastoral kind: the Idyllia of Theocritus were written in the time of the celebrated Ptolemy Philadelphus; and the Eclogues of Virgil, during
the

the reign of Augustus, when Rome had attained the summit of her grandeur. The former may be stiled the father of Pastoral Poetry ; and, though the critics have found fault with him for deviating too much from the proper objects of the pastoral Muse, yet, in genuine strokes of nature, and in simplicity of thought and expression, he stands unrivalled by any of his successors. The Doric dialect, which he so much improved and beautified, is better adapted to the subjects of Pastoral than any other ; and has, as Mr. Pope observes, “ a secret charm in it, “ which no other could ever attain.” Virgil is a professed imitator of Theocritus * ; but in strength^o of judgment, correctness of taste, and delicacy of sentiment, he is far superior to his master. Some of his Eclogues have also been rejected by the critics, as not being confined to subjects purely

* The admirers of Theocritus would consider it as no small improvement, in a future edition of that Poet, to extract from Virgil the parallel passages and imitations, in the same manner that Dr. Clarke has done in his excellent edition of Homer—and we may venture to say, that Virgil would lose nothing by the comparison, for he generally rises above his master.

pastoral.

pastoral. The first, which Mr. Dryden pronounces the standard of all Pastorals, strictly adheres to the great rules which the critics have laid down for this species of Poetry. The Poem opens with laying before us a scene perfectly rural :

*Tityre, tu patulæ recubans sub tegmine fagi
Silvestrem tenui musam meditaris avena.*

The happiness which Tityrus enjoys, and the miserable situation of Melibæus, are beautifully contrasted in the following lines:

*Nos patriæ fines, et dulcia linquimus arva,
Nos patriam fugimus: tu, Tityre, lentus in umbra
Formosam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas.*

This contrast is preserved in a very masterly manner through the whole piece: the sentiments our Poet puts into the mouth of Melibæus are admirably fitted to awaken our sympathetic feelings, and to raise in the mind those peculiar emotions which are felt under the pressures of affliction, from the fond, though painful recollection of former happiness. On the other hand, the situation of Tityrus gives us a pleasing picture of tranquillity, contentment, and rural hospitality; and the Pastoral concludes with a
thought,

thought, which raises in the mind a group of the finest images in nature *. The third, fifth, and seventh Eclogues of Virgil may be considered as perfect models for this species of Poetry.

There have been many attempts at Pastoral among the moderns. Confining ourselves to those of our own country, Pope

- The following is the passage here alluded to:

*Et jam summa procul villarum culmina fumant,
Majoresque cadunt altis de montibus umbræ.*

For see yon sunny hill the shade extends,
And curling smoke from cottages ascends.

Here, first we are presented with the lengthening of the shades of the mountains, which leads the imagination to the setting sun, one of the most glorious shows in nature. The smoke rising from the chimney-tops of the cottages represents the calmness of the air, the serenity of the weather, and gives us a beautiful image of still-life. By an easy association of ideas, we are transported into the cottage, where we behold the honest industrious labourer, after his day's work, surrounded by his little offspring, each emulous "to share the envied kiss:"—then we represent to ourselves the busy housewife preparing the simple, but wholesome repast, and hear all the innocent tales and jokes that circle round the fire-side. An ordinary writer spins out his thoughts, if I may so express myself, to the last dregs; but it is one great mark of an original genius, to give scope to the invention of his reader, and to make one thought give rise to a whole train of ideas,

and Philips are conspicuous in this walk: the former, on account of the enchanting harmony of his verse, is more generally admired than the latter; though Philips has been allowed by many to have more simplicity and originality than his competitor.—Mr. Pope is throughout a close imitator of Virgil; but when we consider that his Pastorals were composed before the age of sixteen, they are certainly entitled to a high degree of applause.

The finest Poem of this kind in the English language, is the Pastoral Ballad of Mr. Shenstone—a Poem which is universally admired—which has been imitated by many—but equalled as yet by none. There is not only an inexpressible charm in the measure of his verse—but the thoughts and sentiments are chiefly his own. And how much he improves and adorns those which he has borrowed from the ancients, take the following examples. The first is from the second Eclogue of Virgil,

1. *Quam dives pecoris nivei, quam lactis abundans.
Mille meæ Siculis errant in montibus agnæ:
Lac mihi non æstate, novum non frigore deficit.*

Which

Which Shenstone thus beautifully imitates :

My banks they are furnish'd with bees,
Whose murmur invites one to sleep :
My grottos are shaded with trees,
And my hills are white over with sheep.

Not my fields in the prime of the year,
More charms than my cattle unfold :
Not a brook that is limpid and clear,
But it glitters with fishes of gold.

2. In the fifth Idyllion of Theocritus
are the two following lines.

Κῆγ' ὦ μὲν δώσω τᾷ παρθένῳ αὐτίκα φάσσαν
Ἐν τᾷς ἀρκεύθῳ καθέλων· τῆνέ γαρ ἐφίσδει.

Virgil thus expresses the same thought :

Parta meæ Veneri sunt munera : namque notavi
Ipse locum, aeris quo congersere palumbes.

To the dear mistress of my love-sick mind,
Her swain a pretty present has design'd :
I saw two stock-doves billing, and, ere long,
Will take the nest, and her's shall be the young.

DRYDEN.

Shenstone seems to have had his eye on
both those passages, when he composed the
following inimitable verses :

I have

I have found out a gift for my fair ;
 I have found where the wood-pigeons breed :
 But let me that plunder forbear,
 She will say 'twas a barbarous deed :

For he ne'er could be true, she averr'd,
 Who could rob a poor bird of her young ;
 And I lov'd her the more when I heard
 Such tenderness fall from her tongue.

I have heard her with sweetness unfold,
 How that pity was due to a dove ;
 That it ever attended the bold,
 And she call'd it the sister of love.

No reader of taste can peruse the Persian Eclogues of Mr. Collins, without being extremely delighted ; and the many precepts of morality, which may be drawn from these compositions, constitute not the least excellence of this elegant Poet †.

I cannot omit taking notice of a Pastoral Comedy, in the Scotch dialect, by Allan Ramsay, entitled, " The Gentle Shepherd," which an agreeable Poet justly styles, " The

† The author has had the pleasure of seeing a late publication on the same plan, entitled, " Moral Eclogues," wherein the rules of Pastoral Poetry are closely attended to—and which have no small share of merit in point of harmonious versification.

“ genuine offspring of the Doric Muse.” In simplicity, the author of this piece may vie with Theocritus, and in tenderness of passion with Virgil : the versification is very harmonious, and it would be easy to point out in the Gentle Shepherd, beauties in description, imagery, and sentiment, which are inferior to none of the most admired productions of the “ rural Muse,” whether ancient or modern. The dialect in which this piece is written, renders it almost unintelligible south of the Tweed ; but it derives from that dialect an air of simplicity, which none but a Scotch ear is capable of relishing. In short, if a just imitation of nature affords pleasure, the Gentle Shepherd is fitted to yield it in the highest degree ; and therefore it is universally admired in the northern part of this island—being no less the delight of the common people, than of those that are possessed of taste and discernment.

One of the most perfect models of the Pastoral kind, in the English language, is an Elegy to the memory of Shenstone, by Mr. Cunningham,

Cunningham, with which I shall conclude these remarks on Pastoral Poetry.

I am not afraid of tiring the reader's patience by transcribing the whole of this composition.

I.

Come, shepherds, we'll follow the hearse,
And see our lov'd Corydon laid :
Tho' sorrow may blemish the verse,
Yet let the sad tribute be paid.
They call'd him the pride of the plain,
In sooth he was gentle and kind :
He mark'd in his elegant strain
The graces that glow'd in his mind.

II.

On purpose he planted yon trees,
That birds in the covert might dwell :
He cultur'd his thyme for the bees,
But never would rise their cell.
Ye lambkins that play'd at his feet,
Go bleat, and your master bemoan :
His music was artless and sweet ;
His manners as mild as your own.

III.

No verdure shall cover the vale ;
No bloom on the blossoms appear ;
The sweets of the forest shall fail,
And winter discolour the year.

No birds in our hedges shall sing
(Our hedges so vocal before)
Since he that should welcome the spring
Can greet the gay season no more.

IV.

His Phillis was fond of his praise,
And shepherds came round in a throng;
They listen'd, and envy'd his lays,
But which of them equall'd his song?
Ye shepherds, henceforward be mute,
For lost is the pastoral strain;
So give me my Corydon's flute,
And thus—let me break it in twain.

The following attempt at Pastoral was made while the author was engaged in the foregoing Essay. The author lays no claim to originality; how far he has succeeded in an imperfect imitation of some of the greatest masters in Pastoral Poetry, he leaves to the determination of his readers. The several passages which have been imitated, both from Virgil and Mr. Pope, are subjoined.

SPRING,

SPRING, a PASTORAL:

OR,

ALEXIS and THYRSIS.

FIRST on thy banks, fair Ouse, I try to sing
 In sylvan strains, and hail the genial spring;
 The kindly season prompts my youthful lays—
 Not the vain hope of mighty Phœbus' praise.
 My humble verse demands a rural theme: 5
 Fair Julia's smiles are triumph, praise, and fame.
 Soon as Aurora blush'd upon the plains,
 Beneath a spreading oak repair'd two swains,
 Both blooming youths, blest'd with congenial fires,
 Both skill'd to utter what the Muse inspires: 10
 His

IMITATIONS.

- Ver. 1, 2. First in these fields I try the sylvan strains,
 Nor blush to sport on Windsor's blissful plains.
 POPE, Past. I.
- Ver. 3, 4. ——— Pastorem Tityre pingues
 Pascere oportet oves, deductum dicere carmen.
 VIRG. Ecl. VI.
- V. 7 to 10. Forte sub arguta confederat ilice Daphnis,
 Compulerantque græges Corydon et Thyrsis in
 unum;
 Ambo florentes ætatibus, Arcades ambo:
 Et cantare pares, et respondere parati.
 D 3 VIRG. Ecl. VII.

His absent Myra young Alexis sung ;
 Fair Myra's name responsive Echo rung :
 While hapless Thyrsis made each dale and grove
 Resound the tale of disappointed love,
 Meanwhile their flocks along the meadows stray'd, 15
 And Corydon sat list'ning in the shade,

ALEXIS.

Now Sol's mild influence warms the fertile soil,
 And now returns the honest ploughman's toil ;
 All nature now proclaims the op'ning year ;
 The fields once more their verdant livery wear : 20
 Daisies and cowslips now the meads adorn,
 And feather'd songsters hail each rising morn.
 O thou,

IMITATIONS.

V. 7, 8, 11, } Beneath the shade a spreading beech displays,
 12, 13, 14. } Hylas and Ægon sung their rural lays ;
 This mourn'd a faithless, that an absent love ;
 And Delia's name, and Doris' fill'd the grove,
 POPE, Past. III.

V. 17 to 22. Et nunc omnis ager, nunc omnis parturit arbos,
 Nunc frondent sylvæ—nunc formosissimus annus:
 VIRG. Ecl. III.

Hear how the birds on ev'ry bloomy spray,
 With joyous music wake the dawning day ;
 Then sing by turns, by turns the Muses sing—
 Now hawthorns blossom ; now the daisies spring ;
 Now leaves the trees, and flowers adorn the ground :
 Begin, the vales shall every note rebound.
 POPE, Past. I.

O thou, my fair, whose winning softness warms
 The coldest bosom, and whose virtue charms;
 Say, beauteous Myra, wilt thou deign to stray 25
 Where thy fond shepherd tunes the rural lay;
 On Ouse's verdant banks, and willow'd shades,
 In Clapham's grove, or Cardington's sweet glades?
 Here in our vales rich fleecy flocks are seen;
 There lowing herds to variegate the scene: 30
 Here Ouse's bounteous streams refresh our swains,
 In wild meanders flowing o'er the plains.
 Order and fair variety appear;
 There sloping hills—and verdant meadows here:
 Here beauteous villas strike th' admiring eyes; 35
 There waving groves and spiry elms arise:
 Here lavish Nature in her glory reigns,
 And peace and freedom crown our blissful plains.
 But if fair Myra, heavenly maid! appear,
 Then shall new glories gild the vernal year. 40
 Return, fair Myra—to these plains return,
 Nor let thy swain in longing absence mourn.
 Thus sung Alexis—Thyrsis thus rejoin'd,
 And pour'd the sorrows of his anxious mind.

THYRSIS.

IMITATIONS,

Ver. 27 to 38, is a close imitation of several verses in the beginning of Mr. Pope's Windsor Forest.

V. 39, 40. Phyllidis adventu nostræ nemus omne virebit;
 Jupiter et læto descendet plurimus imbri.

D 4

VIRG. Ecl. VII,

T H Y R S I S.

Sweeter, O shepherd ! are thy melting strains, 45
 To me, than slumbers to the weary swains ;
 More sweet, more charming to my ravish'd ear,
 Than Philomela's softest notes appear :
 Thy song recalls the memory of those days,
 When fair Eliza's charms inspir'd my lays ; 50
 When from my lips, in strains of artless love,
 Eliza's praises rung thro' every grove.
 Witness, ye murm'ring rills—ye shady bowers,
 Where mine own hands have cull'd the fragrant flowers
 To please my fair—be witness Clutha's shade, 55
 How tenderly I lov'd the matchless maid :
 But yet Eliza heard with cold disdain
 My ardent sighs—and blest'd another swain.
 Time, which to every sorrow yields a balm,
 At length restor'd my breast its wonted calm. 60
 But ah ! the magic of fair Julia's eyes
 Soon made new tumults in my bosom rise ;
 When first these eyes beheld fair Julia's face,
 They felt the force of beauty, sense, and grace.
 Ye Gods ! what charms in her bright form combine ! 65
 What heavenly virtues all those charms refine !

Let

I M I T A T I O N S.

V. 45 to 48. Tale tuum carmen nobis divine poeta,
 Quale sopor fessis in gramine, quale per æstum,
 Dulcis aquæ saliente sitim restinguere rivo.

Ecl. V:

Let Julia smile, Thyrsis shall grieve no more,
Nor his once-lov'd Eliza's loss deplore.

Thus Thyrsis sung, till Phoebus' sultry rays
Compell'd the swains to end their rural lays; 70
A soft retreat they found in Damon's bowers,
From sultry heats, or sudden vernal showers.

ACRITIQUE

A CRITIQUE on the First Book of PARADISE LOST,

With some preliminary observations on the
Poem in general.

Ingenium cui sit, cui mens diviniore, atque os
Magna sonaturum des nominis hujus honorem.

HOR. Sat. 4. Lib. I.

MILTON's great character as a Poet is so well known, that it would seem needless to say any thing concerning it. An amazing strength of genius, unbounded flights of fancy, and a richness of invention, are very conspicuous in all his poetical works—but chiefly in his *Paradise Lost*. His other productions would have been sufficient to have established his character as a first-rate Poet, but in *Paradise Lost* he shines with superior lustre; and we may venture to say, that this divine work will be handed down to succeeding ages as one of the first exertions of human genius.

Some have not scrupled to affirm, that Milton far excels the two great fathers
of

of Epic Poetry—Homer and Virgil. Bishop Atterbury, whose judgment and taste will not be questioned, thus expresses himself, in one of his letters to Pope: “ I protest to
 “ you, this last perusal of him (Milton)
 “ has given me such new degrees, I will
 “ not say of pleasure, but of admiration
 “ and astonishment, that I look upon the
 “ sublimity of Homer, and the majesty of
 “ Virgil, with somewhat less reverence than
 “ I used to do:”—And the following lines of Dr. Barrow are well known :

*Hæc quicunque leget tantum cecinisse putabit
 Mæonidem raras, Virgilium culices.*

Though this may be saying too much, it has, however, been allowed, by some of the greatest admirers of the Iliad and Eneid, that neither Homer nor Virgil were capable of working up their sentiments to that pitch of sublimity which is observable in many parts of Paradise Lost. In this respect, we may adopt the words of Propertius: “ Cedit Romani Scriptores—cedite Graii.”

Those who are well acquainted with Ho-
 mer

mer and Virgil, need not be informed, that they enjoyed several advantages in the writing of their Poems, from which our English Poet was debarred, on account of the nature of his subject, and some local circumstances;—and without taking these into consideration, in estimating the comparative merits of Homer, Virgil, and Milton, the superior genius of the latter will not so evidently appear.

1. Milton's fable afforded him fewer circumstances to build upon than those of the Iliad and Eneid. In the latter, for instance, the scenes of action are to be found in the three quarters of the globe, and the author had not only the Trojan war, but the whole Roman history to work upon; whereas the whole of Milton's Poem is founded upon a few short hints drawn from the Bible.—The Roman Poet fetched the materials of his work from well-known sources; but the greatest part of the circumstances in Paradise Lost were the creatures of Milton's imagination.

2. Milton lay under a great disadvantage from the want of characters: his fable (except

cept to such an original genius as himself) would not seem capable of admitting either a multitude, or a variety of characters.—The characters of the Iliad and Eneid were drawn either from tradition, history, or real life; but how must it raise our admiration of Milton's superior genius, when we consider that the greatest part of the characters in Paradise Lost were supplied out of his own imagination!—such were Uriel, Raphael, Gabriel, Michael, Satan, Moloch, and Belial †—to which may be added the fictitious characters of Sin and Death. Mr. Addison observes, as a proof of our Poet's great art, in giving all that variety of character which his fable would admit; that he has represented our first parents under four distinct characters, and introduced the whole Godhead as exerting itself in man's behalf, under the three-fold distinction of a Creator, a Redeemer, and a Comforter.

† Not but that Milton had some hints from Sacred Writ of those angels, to whom the above-mentioned names refer;—but the description of their persons—their actions and characters, could have been derived from no other source than his own fertile imagination.

3. The religion of the country in which Milton lived, would not allow him to introduce into his Poem the machinery of Pagan deities—which constitutes by far the noblest parts, and gives occasion to the sublimest strokes we meet with in the *Iliad* and *Eneid*.—But we find Milton, in the introduction of the Divine personages, so strict in adhering to the letter of the Scriptures, and so cautious with regard to the orthodoxy of his sentiments—that upon those occasions all his poetic enthusiasm seems to have forsaken him. After all, however, it must be allowed, that Milton had greatly the advantage over both Homer and Virgil, whether we consider the interesting nature of his fable, or the grandeur and magnificence of the several subjects of his Poem: accordingly, in sublimity of thought, and grandeur of expression, he stands unrivalled; and if the *Heathen Poets* were happy in chusing subjects which would interest the Greeks and Romans, and derived much of their fame from those circumstances, it must be allowed, that the Christian Poet has been peculiarly happy in his choice; the subject of his Poem

Poem being interesting, not only to a few individuals, or even a nation, but to the whole human race *.

Thus having made a few preliminary observations on the excellence of Milton's genius, we proceed to make some critical remarks on the First Book of Paradise Lost. The comparative merits of Homer, Virgil, and Milton, may be seen illustrated at greater length in Mr. Addison's critique on the Paradise Lost, under the general heads of—the Fable—Characters—Sentiments—and Language; where he shews, with great ingenuity, that Milton excels in general under each of these heads.

I have made choice of the First Book, because it appears to me to contain a greater variety of beauties than any of the rest, and to afford more instances of that vast sublimity of thought, and grandeur of diction, for which Milton was so eminently distinguished. In no part of Paradise Lost do we meet with such natural and animated descriptions of visible objects, and of the passions—such lively and picturesque imagery—sentiments so just and elevated, as in the Book

* See Mr. Addison's General Critique.

under consideration:—the majesty of the Epic strain is admirably supported throughout—and the many allusions and imitations it contains of ancient authors, give a classical air (so to say) to this book, which must render it extremely pleasing to those who are acquainted with the Heathen Mythology, and are familiar with Homer and Virgil.

The Poem opens in a very beautiful and simple manner, with a brief view of the whole subject, and an invocation of the Muse.

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us; and regain the blissful seat,
Sing heavenly Muse.

It must be pleasing to the classical reader, to remark how exactly Milton has copied after Homer and Virgil in the introduction to his Poem †.

As the fall of man was the subject of

† The corresponding passages are quoted by Bishop Newton, in a note upon those lines. The beautiful variety of numbers in the above quotation is excellently illustrated by the same critic.

Paradise Lost—our author, in the introduction to his Poem, gives a brief view of the cause of that event :

Who first seduc'd them to that foul revolt ?
Th' infernal serpent ; he it was, whose guile,
Stir'd up with envy and revenge, deceiv'd
The mother of mankind.

In which particular it may be observed, that the Poet has also conformed himself to the example of Homer and of Virgil. In no part of the Poem do we meet with so many instances of that vast sublimity of thought, for which Milton was distinguished, as in the First Book. In this respect the following lines may vie with any passage of any Poet, ancient or modern :

Him the Almighty Power
Hurl'd headlong flaming from th' ethereal sky,
With hideous ruin and combustion, down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In adamantine chains and penal fire,
Who durst defy th' Omnipotent to arms.

Milton is never more in his element than when he is describing to us the grandest objects—and he always cloaths his conceptions with the strongest and most expres-

five language. It is hardly possible for the dullest imagination to read the above description without emotion; and I must confess, that I never read it, without thinking I have discovered some new beauty in it. If the reader will give himself the trouble to examine this passage attentively, he will see how happily every word expresses the image to be conveyed—and how each succeeding word gradually enlivens the description—and of course heightens the emotion.

Mr. Addison justly remarks, that the nine days astonishment in which the angels lay entranced in the fiery gulf, is a noble circumstance—and let it be added, that our Poet sets this circumstance forth in all the charms of poetic diction.

Nine times the space that measures day and night
To mortal men, he, with his horrid crew,
Lay vanquish'd, rolling in the fiery gulf,
Confounded though immortal.

To say simply, that they lay nine days, would have given us the same dreadful idea of their fall—but would not have been half so poetical, and pleasing to the imagination, as Milton's manner of expressing it,

Nine

Nine times the space that measures day and night
To mortal men:

And here let me observe, that it is one distinguishing characteristic of an original genius, to represent the most common and ordinary things in such a manner as to raise emotions, which the objects, simply and by themselves, would never produce. To take an example from Horace, who thus beautifully describes an event the most common in nature :

Pallida mors æquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernās,
Regumque turres.

Lib. i. Od. 4.

And thus also Virgil, in the following lines :

Tempus erat quo prima quies mortalibus ægris
Incipit—et dono Divum gratissima serpit.

Many other instances of the like fine turns of thought and expression might be pointed out in other parts of Milton's writings †.

† I would beg leave to observe further, that an original genius is not only distinguished by his talent for placing the most common and ordinary circumstances in striking points of view, but for giving a variety of beautiful descriptions of the same object—each having some particular circumstance

by which it is distinguished from the rest—and communicating different emotions. In this point of view, the reader may consider the following charming descriptions which Virgil gives of the rising sun, in different parts of his works.

Nosque ubi primus equis Oriens afflavit anhelis.

Geor. I. line 250.

Aut ubi sub lucem densa inter nubila sese

Diversi rumpunt radii; aut ubi pallida surget

Tithoni croceum linquens Aurora cubile.

Ibid. 445.

Jamque rubescebat stellis Aurora fugatis.

Ensid, Lib. iii. 521.

Postera jamque dies primo surgebat Eo,

Humentemque Aurora polo dimoverat umbram.

Ibid. 588.

Postera Phœbea lustrabat lampade terras,

Humentemque Aurora polo dimoverat umbram.

Lib. iv. 6.

Primos ubi craftinus ortus

Extulerit Titan, radiisque retexerit orbem.

Ibid. 118.

Oceanum interea surgens Aurora reliquit.

Ibid. 129.

Et jam prima novo spargebat lumine terras

Tithoni croceum linquens Aurora cubile.

Ibid. 584.

Postera cum primo stellas Oriente fugârat

Clara dies.

Lib. v. 42.

Sî nona diem mortalibus alnum

Aurora extulerit, radiisque retexerit orbem.

Ibid. 64.

Expectata dies aderat, nonamque serena

Auroram Phaëtonis equi jam luce vehebant.

Ibid. 104.

Jamque rubescebat radiis mare, et æthere ab alto

Aurora in roseis fulgebat lutea bigis.

Lib. vii. 25.

Evandrum

Evandrum ex humili tecto lux suscitât alma,
Et matutini volucrum sub culmine cantus.

Lib. viii. 455.

Aurora interea miseris mortalibus almam
Extulerat lucem, referens opera atque labores.

Lib. xi. 182.

Postera vix summos spargebat lumine montes
Orta dies, cum primum alto se gurgite tollunt
Solis equi, lucemque elatis naribus efflant. *Lib. xii. 113.*

Take also the following descriptions of the morning from
the inimitable Shakespeare :

The morning steals upon the night,
Melting the darkness. *Tempest, Act v. Sc. 3.*

For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast ;
And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger.

Till the eastern gate all fiery red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.
Midj. N. D. Act iii. Sc. 8.

An hour before the worship'd sun
Peer'd through the golden windows of the east.
Romeo and Juliet, Act i. Sc. 2.

So soon as the all-cheering sun
Should, in the furthest east, begin to draw
The shady curtains from Aurora's bed. *Ibid.*

The grey-ey'd morn smiles on the frowning night,
Check'ring the eastern clouds with streaks of light ;
And darkness flecker'd, like a drunkard reels
From forth day's path, and Titan's burning wheels.
Now, ere the sun advance his burning eye
The day to chear, and night's dank dew to dry.

Ibid. Act ii. Sc. 3.

Look what streaks
Do lace the sev'ring clouds in yonder east ;
E 3 Night's

Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountains tops.

Romeo and Juliet, Act iii. Sc. 7.

But look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill.

Ham. Act i. Sc. 1.

The heavenly harness'd team
Begins his golden progress in the east. *Hen. IV. Part 1.*

But when from under this terrestrial ball
He fires the proud tops of the eastern pines.

Rich. II. Act ii.

See, how the morning opes her golden gates,
And takes her farewell of the glorious sun;
Now well resembles it the pride of youth,
Trimm'd like a younker prancing to his love.

Hen. VI. Part 3. Act ii.

Bid the fair cheek be ready with a blush
Modest as morning, when she coldly eyes
The youthful Phœbus.

Troil. and Cressid.

And yon grey lines,
That fret the clouds, are messengers of day. *Jul. Cæs.*

The reader will not be displeased to see the fertility of
Milton's genius in describing the same object.

As when the sun new risen
Looks through the horizontal misty air,
Shorn of his beams,

Book i. 594.

Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,
With charm of earliest birds; pleasant the sun,
When first on this delightful land he spreads
His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flower,
Glitt'ring with dew.

Book iv. 641.

Now morn her rosy steps in th' eastern clime
Advancing, sow'd the earth with orient pearl. *Book v. 1.*

Soon

Soon as they forth were come to open fight
Of day-spring, and the sun, who, scarce up risen,
With wheels yet hovering o'er the ocean brim,
Shot parallel to the earth his dewy ray,
Discovering in wide landskip all the east
Of Paradise, and Eden's happy plains, *Book v. 138.*

Till morn,
Wak'd by the circling hours, with rosy hand
Unbarr'd the gates of light. *Book vi. 2.*

And now went forth the morn,
Such as in higheft heav'n, arrayed in gold
Empyrean: from before her vanish'd night,
Shot through with orient beams. *Book vi. 12.*

Or when morn
Purples the east. *Book vii. 27.*

First in his east the glorious lamp was seen,
Regent of day, and all th' horizon round
Invested with bright rays, jocund to run
His longitude through heaven's high road: the grey
Dawn, and the Pleiades, before him danc'd,
Shedding sweet influence. *Ibid. 370.*

Now as when sacred light began to dawn
In Eden on the humid flowers, that breath'd
Their morning incense, *Book ix. 192.*

Meanwhile,
To re-salute the world with sacred light,
Leucothea wak'd, and with fresh dews embalm'd
The earth. *Book xi. 133.*

For see the morn,
All unconcern'd with our unrest, begins
Her rosy progress smiling. *Ibid. 173.*

Thus pass'd the night so foul, till morning fair
 Came forth with pilgrim steps in Amice grey,
 Who with her radiant finger still'd the roar
 Of thunder, chas'd the clouds, and laid the winds.

The birds,

Who all things now beheld more fresh and green,
 After a night of storm so ruinous,
 Clear'd up their choicest notes in bush and spray,
 To gratulate the sweet return of morn.

Book iv. 426.

So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
 And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
 And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
 Flames in the forehead of the morning sky. *Lycidas.*

So when the sun in bed,
 Curtain'd with cloudy red,
 Pillows his chin upon an orient wave.

Hymn on the Nativ. Stanza 26.

Sometime walking not unseen,
 By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green,
 Right against the eastern gate,
 Where the great sun begins his state,
 Rob'd in flames, and amber light,
 The clouds in thousand liveries dight. *L' Allegro.*

It is remarkable, that Milton speaks of the nightingale no less than in seven different places in *Paradise Lost*, as well as occasionally in other parts of his Works;—and all those different passages are diversified in the most agreeable manner. The reader will find them collected by Bishop Newton, in a note on *Book vii. of Paradise Lost*, line 435.

Besides descriptions of visible objects, a Poet of original genius will often place the same thoughts or sentiments, and those too the most obvious and ordinary, in a great variety of pleasing attitudes. Thus, what a variety of fine reflections

reflections does Horace make on an event the simplest and most common in nature—I mean, Death ! To select a few examples.—Nothing can be more beautiful than the passage already quoted,

Pallida mors æquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas
Regumque turres.

Quod si Threïcio blandius Orpheo,
Auditam moderere arboribus fidem ;
Non vanæ redeat sanguis imagini. *Lib. i. Od. 24. 13.*

Nec quidquam tibi prodest
Aëreas tentâsse domos, animoque rotundum
Percurrisse polum morituro. *Ibid. Od. 28. 4.*

Sed omnes una manet nox
Et calcanda semel via lethi *Ibid. 15.*

Mista senum ac juvenum densantur funera ; nullum
Sæva caput Proserpina fugit. *Ibid. 19.*

Cedes coemptis saltibus, et domo,
Villaque, flavus quam Tiberis lavit,
Cedes ; et extructis in altum
Divitiis potietur heres.

Divesne, prisco natus ab Inacho,
Nil interest, an pauper, et infima
De gente sub Dio moreris,
Victima nil miserantis Orci.

Omnes eodem cogimur : omnium
Versatur urna serius, ocius
Sors exitura, et nos in æternum
Exilium impositura cymbæ. *Lib. ii. Od. 3. 17.*

The whole fourteenth Ode of this second book is full of the noblest reflections on the shortness of life, and certainty of death. I shall select those lines that seem to me most pathetic.

Eheu

Bheu fugaces, Postume, Postume,

Labuntur anni : nec pietas moram

Rugis et instanti senectæ

Adferet, indomitæque morti. *Lib. ii. Od. 14. 1.*

Linquenda tellus, et domus, et placens

Uxor : neque harum, quas colis, arborum

Te, præter invisas cupressos,

Ulla brevem dominum sequetur. *Ibid. 14. 21.*

Nulla certior tamen

Rapacis Orci sede destinata

Aula divitem manet

Herum. quid ultra tendis ? æqua tellus

Pauperi recluditur,

Regumque pueris : nec satelles Orci

Callidum Promethea

Revexit, auro captus. hic superbum

Tantalum atque Tantali,

Genus coercet : hic levare functum

Pauperem laboribus,

Vocatus atque non vocatus audit.

Ibid. Od. 18. 29.

Mors et fugacem persequitur virum ;

Nec parcit imbellis juventæ

Poplitibus, timidove tergo. *Lib. iii. Od. 2. 14.*

Cum semel occideris, et de te splendida Minos

Fecerit arbitria ;

Non, Torquate, genus, non te facundia, non te

Restituet pietas. *Lib. iv. Od. 7. 21.*

Quid vici profunt, aut horrea ? quidve Calabris

Saltibus adjecti Lucani ? si metit Orcus

Grandia cum parvis, non exorabilis auro.

Epist. 2. Lib. ii. 177.

The whole variety of beautiful reflections which we have
here

In the following passage, the height of despair is strongly marked; and it also contains one of the boldest images in nature—an image that wonderfully reflects the very countenance and character of Satan, and cannot but make some impression on the dullest imagination.

But his doom
Reserv'd him to more wrath; for now the thought
Both of lost happiness and lasting pain
Torments him; round he throws his baleful eyes,
That witness'd huge affliction and dismay,
Mix'd with obdurate pride and stedfast hate.

Milton shines equally in every species of descriptive Poetry. The following description of Hell cannot but give a clear conception of the object described, to every reader. It is perfectly agreeable to the notions

here quoted from Horace, is reducible to this simple proposition—that “All men must die.” Many instances of the like fertility of genius might be pointed out in Milton—but we will not extend the length of this note by any further quotations, as such instances will present themselves in every part of Milton's Works, to every person who reads him with any degree of taste;—and we might venture to assert, that, next to Homer, there is no writer, ancient or modern, so happy in diversifying his thoughts and sentiments as Milton.

generally

generally entertained of that place, and heightened by every circumstance of pain, horror, and despair, which we conceive to attend such a situation.

At once, as far as angels ken, he views
 The dismal situation waste and wild,
 A dungeon horrible on all sides round
 As one great furnace flam'd, yet from those flames
 No light, but rather darkness visible
 Serv'd only to discover fights of woe,
 Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
 And rest can never dwell; hope never comes,
 That comes to all; but torture without end
 Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed
 With ever-burning sulphur unconsum'd.
 Such place Eternal Justice had prepar'd
 For those rebellious; here their prison ordain'd
 In utter darkness, and their portion set,
 As far remov'd from God, and light of heav'n,
 As from the center thrice to th' utmost pole.

The above description is complete; that is to say, we have not only the several qualities of the objects described enumerated, but their effects upon the mind pointed out;—nor must we omit the circumstance of making darkness visible—one of the boldest strokes that was ever invented by any Poet. The bad angels are represented, as being not only in the height of misery, but even Hope
 itself

itself—that great sweetener of the cup of life, and the last refuge of the wretched—is excluded from those “regions of sorrow.”

And the description concludes with an idea of the depth of Hell—which can only be comprehended, in its full extent, by an imagination that has been accustomed to speculate on the highest intellectual notions.

The same perspicuity and propriety—the same fruitfulness of invention, and strength of imagination, appear in all Milton’s descriptions. If he describes external objects, he omits nothing that can give us clear and distinct ideas of them, whether by a concise enumeration of their several parts, or by representing their effects on the mind of the spectator: and when he traces the inward workings of the human mind, and describes its thoughts, sentiments, and passions, he never fails to raise, transport, and agitate.

We shall here collect into one view some of the chief examples which this Book affords of the former species of description—as frequent instances of the latter will occur in reviewing the several characters that make their appearance in this Book.

1. Satan, in an address to Beelzebub—
where

where he points to a division of Hell, in which the fiery element was firm and solid, thus describes it :

Seest thou yon dreary plain, forlorn and wild,
The seat of desolation, void of light,
Save what the glimmering of these livid flames
Casts pale and dreadful ?

2. Thus he describes Satan, when he would convey an idea of his bulk :

With head uplift above the wave, and eyes
That sparkling blaz'd ; his other parts besides
Prone on the flood extended long and large,
Lay floating many a rood.

3. But there is no description in this whole Book more highly finished than that of Satan's standard-bearer, Azazel—the standard itself—and the ensigns and arms of the fallen angels.

Then strait commands, that at the warlike sound
Of trumpets loud, and clarions, be uprear'd
His mighty standard : that proud honour claim'd
Azazel as his right, a cherub tall ;
Who forthwith from the glitt'ring staff unfurl'd
Th' imperial ensign, which full high advanc'd,
Shone like a meteor streaming to the wind,
With gems and golden lustre rich emblaz'd,

Seraphic

Seraphic arms and trophies, all the while
 Sonorous metal blowing martial sounds :
 At which the universal host up sent
 A shout, that tore Hell's concave, and beyond
 Frighted the reign of Chaos and old Night.
 All in a moment through the gloom were seen
 Ten thousand banners rise into the air,
 With orient colours waving : with them rose
 A forest huge of spears, and thronging helms
 Appear'd, and serried shields in thick array,
 Of depth immeasurable.

A just taste for the grand and beautiful,
 is no uncommon talent, and may be ac-
 quired, or rather improved, by culture ;
 but to be capable of exhibiting those ideas
 in their full proportions, through the me-
 dium of arbitrary signs, requires no incon-
 siderable spark of the flame of genius.—
 There is so much force and animation in
 Milton's descriptions, that he makes his
 reader clearly behold every object, and
 carries him into the midst of every scene.
 We might apply this remark particularly to
 the above description : but he must have a
 very cold imagination indeed, who, in read-
 ing that passage, should require the help of
 illustration : I will only observe, that Mil-
 ton

ton very often enlivens his descriptions, by introducing some additional circumstances, not absolutely and necessarily connected with the objects described, but whose connection however is either not improbable or uncommon:—of this nature are the following lines, subjoined to his description of the imperial standard.

All the while

Sonorous metal blowing martial sounds :

At which the universal host up sent,

A shout, that tore Hell's concave, and beyond

Frighted the reign of Chaos and old Night.

4. Next follows a description of Satan's countenance—The beauties of the several antitheses in this description are too obvious to require any illustration.

Darken'd so, yet shone

Above them all th' arch-angel : but his face

Deep scars of thunder had entrench'd, and care

Sat on his faded cheek, but under brows

Of dauntless courage, and confederate pride

Waiting revenge : cruel his eye, but cast

Signs of remorse and passion, to behold

The fellows of his crime, the followers rather,

(Far other once beheld in blifs) condemn'd

For ever now to have their lot in pain.

What

What a fine subject for the pencil to work upon!

5. The following description of Pandemonium is a sufficient proof both of the pregnancy of Milton's imagination, and of his talent for descriptive Poetry.

Anon out of the earth a fabric huge
Rose like an exhalation, with the sound
Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet,
Built like a temple, where pilasters round
Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
With golden architrave; nor did there want
Cornice or frieze, with bossy sculptures graven;
The roof was fretted gold.

Th' ascending pile
Stood fix'd her stately height, and strait the doors,
Opening their brazen folds, discover wide
Within her ample spaces, o'er the smooth
And level pavement: from the arched roof,
Pendent by subtle magic, many a row
Of starry lamps and blazing cressets, fed
With Naphtha and Asphaltus, yielded light
As from a sky.

We may observe, that Milton often heightens his descriptions by the most artful contrasts.—There are several examples of this sort in the First Book, and the reader

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may

may not be displeased to see them quoted here at length.

1. One of his descriptions of Hell concludes with the following line, which expresses more than an ordinary writer could convey in twenty.

O how unlike the place from whence they fell !

2. So also at the beginning of Satan's first address to Beelzebub.

If thou bee'st he ; but O how fall'n ! how chang'd
From him, who, in the happy realms of light,
Cloath'd with transcendent brightness, didst outshine
Myriads, though bright !

3. The finest instance of this sort of beauty which we meet with in this Book, or indeed in the whole Poem, is the following passage, where Satan contrasts the horrors of the infernal regions with the happiness of the heavenly mansions.

Is this the region, this the foil, the clime,
Said then the lost archangel ; this the seat
That we must change for Heav'n ? this mournful gloom
For that celestial light ?

And again,

Farewell.

Farewell happy fields,
Where joy for ever dwells : hail horrors, hail
Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell
Receive thy new possessor.

4. A contrast between the former and present appearance of Satan.

His form had yet not lost
All her original brightness, nor appear'd
Less than archangel ruin'd, and th' excess
Of glory obscur'd:

5. Observe how he raises our ideas of the vast stature and strength of the fallen angels.

For never since created man
Met such embodied force, as nam'd with these
Could merit more than that small infantry
Warr'd on by cranes; though all the giant brood
Of Phlegra with th' heroic race were join'd
That fought at Thebes and Ilium, on each side,
Mix'd with auxiliar Gods.

6. And of the grandeur and magnificence of Pandemonium.

Not Babylon,
Nor great Alcairo, such magnificence
Equall'd in all their glories, to inshrine
Belus or Serapis their Gods, or seat
Their kings, when Egypt with Assyria strove
In wealth and luxury.

I shall conclude my remarks under this head with observing, that Milton is distinguished for the conciseness and unity of his descriptions: without being tediously circumstantial, he omits no material circumstances—and he seldom admits any thing to interfere with that particular emotion which he means to convey. In Milton we seldom meet with an incoherent mixture of grandeur and littleness, sublimity and meanness; and when he would convey the delightful emotions of beauty, whether in animated or inanimate objects, we find in his strains all the attractive sweetness of the quality which he describes. In a word, in Milton's descriptions we see the difference there is between mere daubing and fine colouring.

We now return to the dialogue between Satan and Beelzebub (line 84) in which the thoughts and sentiments are every way suitable to their situation and characters. Satan first addresses his copartner; and in this speech the effects of almighty power upon them are very happily displayed—Beelzebub is so changed, that Satan hardly knows him.

If

If thou beest he; but O! how fall'n, how chang'd.

And again,

Into what pit thou seest
From what height fall'n, so much the stronger prov'd
He with his thunder *: and till then who knew
The force of those dire arms.

He was forced to acknowledge the omnipotence of his adversary—but here he stops short—for that acknowledgment serves only to recall his impenitence.

Yet not for these,
Nor what the potent victor in his rage
Can else inflict, do I repent or change,
Though chang'd in outward lustre, that fix'd mind,
And high disdain, from sense of injur'd merit,
That with the mightiest rais'd me to contend.

These sentiments are succeeded by those of revenge and hatred.

What though the field be lost,
All is not lost; th' unconquerable will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield,

* “He with his thunder.” Dr. Newton very properly remarks, that there is an uncommon beauty in this expression—Satan disdains to use the name of God, though he cannot but acknowledge his superiority.

And what is else not to be overcome,
That glory never shall his wrath or might
Extort from me.

But these serve only to introduce his pride
and envy.

To bow and sue for grace
With suppliant knee, and deify his power,
Who from the terror of this arm so late
Doubted his empire, that were low indeed ;
That were an ignominy and shame beneath
This downfall.

And the sense of his immortality tends but
to confirm him in his rebellion, and resolu-
tions of farther resistance, notwithstanding
the height of despair in which he was in-
volved.

Since by fate, the strength of Gods
And this empyreal substance cannot fail,
Since, through experience of this great event,
In arms not worse, in foresight much advanc'd,
We may with more successful hope resolve
To wage by force or guile eternal war,
Irreconcilable to our grand foe,
Who now triumphs, and in th' excess of joy
Sole reigning holds the tyranny of heaven.

We have thought this first speech of Satan
deserving of a particular analysis, since, as
Mr.

Mr. Addison observes, "it is a complication of all those passions which discover themselves separately in several other of his speeches in the Poem."

Beelzebub, whose spirits had been more depressed than Satan's by their late overthrow, was now thrown into the utmost despair, at the thoughts of an "eternal war" with the Almighty, and of undergoing eternal punishment.

He ends his speech thus :

What can it then avail, though yet we feel
Strength undiminish'd, or eternal being,
To undergo eternal punishment?

Satan instantly replies, that "weakness is misery, whether we are doing or suffering;" and then endeavours to support the spirits of his fellow-sufferer, by mentioning every possible circumstance which he thought might have diminished the strength of his conqueror. The passage deserves to be quoted at length, on account of the sublimity of the several images it contains.

But see, the angry victor hath recall'd
His ministers of vengeance and pursuit

Back to the gates of heav'n ; the sulphurous hail
 Shot after us in storm, o'erblown, hath laid
 The fiery surge, that from the precipice
 Of heav'n receiv'd us falling ; and the thunder,
 Wing'd with red lightning, and impetuous rage,
 Perhaps hath spent his shafts, and ceases now
 To bellow through the vast and boundless deep.
 Let us not slip th' occasion, whether scorn
 Or satiate fury yield it from our foe.

The First Book of *Paradise Lost* contains a greater variety of imagery than any other in the whole Poem ; and it was remarked in a former part of this Essay, that in no part of the Poem do we meet with such splendid and picturesque imagery as in the Book under review. Those who relish the beauties of fine imagery will pardon me for enlarging under a head where Milton appears to so much advantage.

I must premise, however, that the reader is not to expect an enumeration of the several rules for poetical imagery that have been laid down by the critics ;—this would be too wide a field, and foreign to our purpose—we shall content ourselves with comparing some of the most exquisite beauties of imagery that occur in this Book to parallel

parallel passages in some of the most admired Poets, not troubling the reader with the rules and precepts of critics, further than as they may serve to be illustrated by examples from Milton.

Among the several sources of the sublime which are enumerated by Longinus, imagery makes a capital figure—and we may add with M. Rollin, that it may be used in the soft and pathetic, no less successfully than in the grand and sublime.

Let it be remarked, that under the head of imagery, we include figures of speech, as well as formal comparisons or similes. To speak more particularly of the latter:—It is observed by an elegant writer *, that comparisons may be used; 1st, either to illustrate; 2d, to amplify; 3d, or to produce variety and delight: and one of the most ingenious critics of modern times †, in enumerating the various sources of the pleasures which are derived from comparison, mentions the

* Lowth de Sacra Poesi Hebræorum.

† Lord Kaimes, in his "Elements of Criticism," a work which has contributed more to the advancement of polite literature than perhaps any other modern production.

following

following among others:—1st, by suggesting some unusual resemblance or contrast; 2d, setting an object in the strongest light; 3d, the associating an object with others that are agreeable. The First Book of Paradise Lost will afford a sufficient number of examples to illustrate these principles.

In the following simile the Poet aims to amplify his object—and nothing surely could place that object in a stronger light than the following points of resemblance.

In bulk as huge
As whom the fables name of monstrous size,
Titanian, or Earth-born, that warr'd on Jove,
Briareos, or Typhon, whom the den
By ancient Tarsus held, or that sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim th' ocean stream.

The frequent allusions made by our Poet to the Heathen Mythology will, no doubt, be pleasing to a classical reader:—yet must it be objected to him, that he makes too great a parade of learning; and it is to be regretted, that in a Poem of which the subject is so popular, the author did not more consult the taste of the bulk of readers. To perceive,

ceive, for instance, the beauties of the above simile, the reader must have some conception of the bulk of the several objects that are introduced into it—the Titans, Briareos, &c.—and for this purpose recourse must be had to the ancient Poets;—by whom we are informed, that one of the Titans covered nine acres—and that Briareos had an hundred arms and fifty heads.

Some readers, who have been more attentive to dissect parts of speech, than to exercise the powers of taste—and some critics, possessed of too much mere verbal knowledge to be entitled to much sensibility—have objected to many of Milton's similes, as having a variety of unconnected circumstances subjoined to them, which weaken exceedingly the force of his comparisons: but let the reader judge, whether, for example, the comparison of Satan to the sleeping Leviathan loses any thing by the following additional circumstance:

Him haply slumb'ring on the Norway foam,
The pilot of some small night-founder'd skiff
Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,
With fixed anchor in his scaly rind

Moors

Moors by his side under the lee, while night
Invests the sea, and wished morn delays.

Whoever would object to the above passage, or would wish to lop it off, however skilled he may be in words and points, must not surely be allowed to know any thing of the "beaming soul *."

The greatest ancient Poets frequently compare the shields of their heroes to the moon's orb—and this is a very common simile with Ossian.

Milton also compares the shield of Satan to the full moon: but observe how he avails himself of the modern discoveries in astronomy, to elevate the object of his comparison, and to give an air of surpassing novelty to one of the most common similes in Poetry.

The broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb
Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views
At evening from the top of Fesolé,
Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,
Rivers or mountains, in her spotty globe.

Then follows a description of his spear—

* Dunciad, book iv. line 236.

which may be referred to that sort of comparison that pleases, according to a great critic, by suggesting some unusual contrast.

His spear, to equal which the tallest pine
Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the mast
Of some great ammiral, were but a wand.

The next simile I shall quote, is that in which the angels, lying in the fiery gulf, are compared to autumnal leaves, or sea-sedge, floating after a storm.

His legions, angel forms, who lay intranc'd
Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks
In Vallombrosa, where th' Etrurian shades
High over-arch'd imbrow'r; or scatter'd sedge
Afloat, when with fierce winds Orion arm'd
Hath vex'd the Red-sea coast.

And then he makes a digression similar to that in his comparison of the sleeping Leviathan :

Whose waves o'erthrew
Bustis and his Memphian chivalry,
While with perfidious hatred they pursu'd
The sojourners of Goshen.

And this digression leads him to represent the angels by a new simile :

Who

Who beheld
From the safe shore their floating carcases
And broken chariot-wheels : so thick bestrown
Abject and lost lay these, covering the flood *.

The following seems to be the finest instance we have in this Book of long-tailed comparisons—as Addison informs us they have been ludicrously called by a French critic—The angels, having contracted their size in Pandemonium, are compared to fairies.

They but now who seem'd
In bigness to surpass earth's giant sons,
Now less than smallest dwarfs, in narrow room
Throng numberless, like that pygmean race
Beyond the Indian mount, or faery elves,
Whose midnight revels by a forest side
Or fountain, some belated peasant sees,
Or dreams he sees, while overhead the moon
Sits arbitress, and nearer to the earth
Wheels her pale course, they, on their mirth and dance
Intent, with jocund music charm his ear;
At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds.

The following simile, where Satan is compared to the sun in an eclipse, is of the

* See a note in Dr. Newton's edition, on the above passage, justifying our Poet's frequent use of long similes, and illustrating the beauties of the above simile.

same

same nature with the above, and needs no comment :

As when the sun new risen
Looks through the horizontal misty air
Shorn of his beams, or from behind the moon
In dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs.

Homer abounds with examples of this sort of comparison.—To select a few :

The fires kindled by night in the Trojan camp are compared to the moon and stars shining in unclouded lustre. I would venture to say that Mr. Pope's translation rises above the original.

As when the moon, refulgent lamp of night !
O'er heaven's clear azure spreads her sacred light ;
When not a breath disturbs the deep serene,
And not a cloud o'ercasts the solemn scene ;
Around her throne the vivid planets roll,
And stars unnumber'd gild the glowing pole,
O'er the dark trees a yellow verdure shed,
And tip't with silver ev'ry mountain's head ;
Then shine the vales, the rocks in prospect rise,
A flood of glory bursts from all the skies :
The conscious swains, rejoicing in the sight,
Eye the blue vault, and bless the useful light.

So many flames before proud Ilion blaze,
And lighten glim'ring Xanthus with their rays.

Iliad. Lib. viii. 687.

Of the same nature is the following simile—in which the motion of two armies against one another is compared to that of two rapid rivers meeting and roaring.

As torrents roll, increas'd by num'rous rills,
With rage impetuous down their echoing hills,
Rush to the vales, and, pour'd along the plain,
Roar through a thousand channels to the main;
The distant shepherd trembling hears the sound;
So mix both hosts, and so their cries rebound.

Book iv. 515.

Which is thus imitated by Virgil :

In segetem veluti cum flamma furentibus Austris
Incidit, aut rapidus montano flumine torrens
Sternit agros, sternit sata læta boumque labores;
Præcipitesque trahit filvas : stupet inscius alto
Accipiens sonitum saxi de vertice pastor.

Eneid, Lib. ii.

I have met with no examples of this sort of comparison in the whole *Iliad*, that pleased me more than the two following :

As when two scales are charg'd with doubtful loads,
From side to side the trembling balance nods,

(While

(While some laborious matron, just and poor,
 With nice exactness weighs her woolly store)
 Till pois'd aloft, the resting beam suspends
 Each equal weight; nor this, nor that, descends:
 So stood the war, till Hector's matchless might,
 With fates prevalling, turn'd the scale of fight.

Lib. xii. 521.

Not with less noise, with less impetuous force,
 The tide of Trojans urge their desp'rate course,
 Than when in autumn Jove his fury pours,
 And earth is loaden with incessant show'rs;
 (When guilty mortals break th' eternal laws,
 Or judges, brib'd, betray the righteous cause;)
 From their deep beds he bids the rivers rise,
 And opens all the flood-gates of the skies:
 Th' impetuous torrents from their hills obey,
 Whole fields are drown'd, and mountains swept away;
 Loud roars the deluge, till it meets the main,
 And trembling man sees all his labours vain*.

Lib. xvi. 464.

* To the above simile Mr. Pope subjoins the following excellent note: "The Poet, in this image of an inundation, takes occasion to mention a sentiment of great piety, that such calamities were the effects of divine justice punishing the sins of mankind." This is one among a thousand instances of Homer's indirect and oblique manner of introducing moral sentences and instructions. These agreeably break in upon his reader, even in descriptions and poetical parts, where one naturally expects only painting and amusement. We have virtue put upon us by surprise, and are pleased to find a thing where we should never have looked to meet with it.

G

Once

Once more, and we shall have done.

As when from some beleaguer'd town arise
The smokes, high curling to the shaded skies ;
(Seen from some island, o'er the main afar,
When men, distressed, hang out the sign of war) ;
Soon as the sun in ocean hides his rays,
Thick on the hills the flaming beacons blaze ;
With long-projected beams the seas are bright,
And heaven's high arch reflects the ruddy light :
So from Achilles' head the splendors rise,
Reflecting blaze on blaze against the skies.

Lib. xviii. 245.

Those who have formed their tastes for Poetry upon the models of Homer and Virgil, must admire Milton for the success with which he has imitated them in the structure of his similes ; and it may be observed, that the digressional parts of Milton's similes seldom fail to afford the reader either improvement or delight. Sometimes we find ourselves transported for a moment upon classic ground, or amused with feats of romance and chivalry ; and at other times he makes a short digression from a simile, to surprise the fancy by some new and delightful image : nor must we forget that our Poet frequently variegates his imagery to better purposes than

than those—for often, in the midst of a simile, does he improve us, by introducing a pious sentiment, or moral precept; or presents objects to awaken our sensibility, and melt the heart into tenderness *.

The following remarks of a great critic, to whom we have frequently referred under the head of imagery, will, it is hoped, justify all that has been said with regard to the propriety and beauty of digressional similes:—"Milton has a peculiar talent in
 " embellishing the principal subject, by associating it with others that are agreeable.
 " Similes of this kind diversify the narration by new images that are not strictly
 " necessary to the comparison: they are
 " short episodes, which, without drawing
 " us from the principal subject, afford great
 " delight by their beauty and variety.
 " With regard to similes of this kind, it
 " will readily occur to the reader, that

* It may be observed, that the species of comparison we have been speaking of may be referred to that which Dr. Lowth mentions, as "intended to produce variety"—and the pleasure we receive from it may be referred to the principle of association. See *Elements of Criticism*, on Comparisons.

“ when a resembling subject is once properly introduced in a simile, the mind is transitorily amused with the new object, and is not dissatisfied with the slight interruption. Thus, in fine weather, the momentary excursions of a traveller for agreeable prospects, or elegant buildings, cheer his mind, relieve him from the languor of uniformity, and, without much lengthening his journey in reality, shorten it greatly in appearance *.”

It cannot often be objected to Milton's similes, that the points of resemblance are feeble or distant: to abound in such modes of comparison argues a taste either very vitiated or unimproved. Nothing could possibly place an object in a stronger light than the following simile:

A dungeon horrible on all sides round
As one great furnace flam'd.

* If the reader is desirous of seeing more instances of this sort of comparison, he may turn to the following references: Lib. II. 285. Ibid. 488. Ibid. 636. Ibid. 662. Ibid. 943. III. 431. IV. 159. Ibid. 275. Ibid. 280. Ibid. 980. V. 271. IX. 445. X. 305. XI. 130. Ibid. 213. Ibid. 241.

The

The same principle is beautifully exemplified in the following comparisons :

If it were land that ever burn'd
With solid, as the lake with liquid fire ;
And such appear'd in hue, as when the force
Of subterranean wind transports a hill
Torn from Pelorus, or the shatter'd side
Of thund'ring Ætna, whose combustible
And fuel'd entrails thence conceiving fire,
Sublim'd with mineral fury, aid the winds,
And leave a singed bottom all involv'd
With stench and smoke.

Who forthwith from the glittering staff unfurl'd
Th' imperial ensign, which full high advanc'd
Shone like a meteor streaming to the wind.

As when the potent rod
Of Amram's son, in Egypt's evil day,
Wav'd round the coast, up call'd a pitchy cloud
Of locusts, warping on the eastern wind,
That o'er the realm of impious Pharaoh hung
Like night, and darken'd all the land of Nile :
So numberless were those bad angels seen,
Hovering on wing under the cope of hell,
'Twixt upper, nether, and surrounding fires,

This last simile suggested the following thoughts to the ingenious author of Elements of Criticism:—"As words convey but
" a faint and obscure notion of great num-

" bers, a Poet, to give a lively notion of
 " the object he describes, with regard to
 " number, does well to compare it to what
 " is familiar and commonly known. Thus
 " Homer compares the Grecian army, in
 " point of number, to a swarm of bees; in
 " another passage he compares it to that
 " profusion of leaves and flowers which ap-
 " pear in the spring, or of insects in a sum-
 " mer's evening. Such comparisons have,
 " by some writers, been condemned for the
 " lowness of the images introduced; but
 " surely without reason; for, with regard
 " to numbers, they put the principal sub-
 " ject in a strong light."

These remarks will serve to illustrate the
 following exquisite simile.

As bees

In spring-time, when the sun with Taurus rides,
 Pour forth their populous youth about the hive
 In clusters; they among fresh dews and flowers
 Fly to and fro, or on the smoothed plank,
 The suburb of their straw-built citadel,
 New rubb'd with balm, expatiate and confer
 Their state-affairs: so thick the aery croud
 Swarm'd, and were straiten'd.

This

This is evidently an imitation of Homer's comparison of the Grecians to a swarm of bees, in the Second Book, and also of some others of the same nature in Virgil, as they are quoted by Dr. Newton in a note upon this passage.

The following comparison is intended to amplify—and this is effected by suggesting a striking contrast.

A multitude, like which the populous north
Pour'd never from her frozen loins, to pass
Rhene or the Danaw.

The Poet now raises a new simile :

When her barbarous sons
Came like a deluge on the south, and spread
Beneath Gibraltar to the Lybian sands.

The following is a comparison of the fallen angels to oaks or pines blasted :

Yet faithful how they stood,
Their glory wither'd ; as when heaven's fire
Hath scath'd the forest oaks, or mountain pines,
With singed top, their stately growth, though bare,
Stands on the blasted heath.

The beauties of this simile are thus excellently unfolded in one of Dr. Newton's

notes:—"This is a very beautiful and close
 " simile; it represents the majestic stature,
 " and withered glory of the angels: and
 " the last with great propriety, since their
 " lustre was impaired by thunder, as well
 " as that of the trees in the simile; and be-
 " sides, the blasted heath gives us some idea
 " of that singed burning soil on which the
 " angels were standing.

" Homer and Virgil frequently use com-
 " parisons from trees, to express the sta-
 " ture or falling of a hero; but none of them
 " are applied with such variety and propriety
 " of circumstances as this of Milton."

The author of Elements of Criticism re-
 marks, that it has no good effect to com-
 pare things by way of simile that are of the
 same kind. Upon this principle he con-
 demns the following simile from Milton,
 in which the builders of Pandemonium are
 compared to pioneers—which he considers
 as too obvious a resemblance to make a
 strong impression.

Thither, wing'd with speed,
 A numerous brigade hasten'd; as when bands
 Of pioneers, with spade and pickax arm'd,

Forerun

Forerun the royal camp, to trench a field,
Or cast a rampart.

We are sorry to dissent from the judgment of so great a critic—but we are at a loss to think of any other point of resemblance which could have made a stronger impression than that adopted by our Poet: to compare the pioneers of one army to those of another, would be a palpable absurdity; but we conceive that there is a sufficient dissimilarity between our notions of the infernal host, and our ideas of a military body of men, to render them not improper subjects of a simile.

What an unusual, but at the same time what an exquisite resemblance is suggested in the sudden production of Pandemonium!

Anon out of the earth a fabric huge
Rose like an exhalation, with the sound
Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet.

The following simile, while it delights by an unexpected, though obvious resemblance, surprises us by its novelty.—The manner of cementing the walls of Pandemonium is compared to the wind of an organ.

A third

A third as soon had form'd within the ground
A various mould, and from the boiling cells
By strange conveyance fill'd each hollow nook,
As in an organ from one blast of wind
To many a row of pipes the sound-board breathes.

Perspicuity is one of the most essential properties of a comparison: that quality or attribute which is to be ascribed to an object, should be clearly discerned in the medium of comparison—the following example will explain my meaning.

Thus far these beyond
Compare of mortal prowess, yet observ'd
Their dread commander: he above the rest
In shape and gesture proudly eminent
Stood like a tow'r.

If we consider the superiority which a tower possesses among other buildings, the force of this comparison will evidently appear. It may be remarked also, that the manner in which our Poet has arranged his words, contributes very much to heighten our conception of the bulk of Satan—"Stood like a tow'r." It often produces very fine effects in Poetry, thus to stop short in the middle of a line—and no Poet abounds with

with more beautiful examples of this sort than Milton.

The infernal king is represented to us in the same description by another simile—which many have thought inferior to none in the Book now before us. The remarkable contrast between Satan's former and present situation suggests a simile which derives its beauty from one of the finest contrasts in nature; that between the sun in a mist—or in an eclipse—and when he shines in his unclouded meridian splendor.

As when the sun new-risen

Looks through the horizontal misty air,
Shorn of his beams, or from behind the moon
In dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs.

Besides similes—or comparisons—there are many beautiful figures in the First Book. Of all the figures that are used in Poetry, personification and apostrophe are the most bold and animated.—The following quotation will give a notion of the nature of the former of these figures :

In the beginning how the heav'ns and earth
Rose out of Chaos,

We

We have two examples of this figure in the First Book, that are conceived in the true sublime spirit of Poetry.

The thunder,
Wing'd with red lightning, and impetuous rage,
Perhaps hath spent his shafts, and ceases now
To bellow through the vast and boundless deep.
At which the universal host up sent
A shout, that tore Hell's concave, and beyond
Frighted the reign of Chaos and old Night.

The following example of the same figure, though relished by some, seems to me rather quaint:

Then with expanded wings he steers his flight
Aloft, incumbent on the dusky air,
That felt unusual weight.

Of apostrophe, take the following example:

Farewell happy fields,
Where joy for ever dwells: hail horrors, hail
Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell
Receive thy new possessor.

The following inimitable apostrophe to the Sun is taken from the Fourth Book, and
is

is evidently dictated by the same sentiments which gave occasion to the above.

O thou, that with surpassing glory crown'd,
Look'st from thy sole dominion like the God
Of this new world ; at whose sight all the stars
Hide their diminish'd heads ; to thee I call,
But with no friendly voice, and add thy name,
O Sun, to tell thee how I hate thy beams,
That bring to my remembrance from what state
I fell ; how glorious once above thy sphere * !

The dialogue between Satan and Beelzebub gave occasion to remark some of the beauties of sentiment which occur in the

* We might be profuse of examples of this figure from different parts of the Poem—and the reader, we presume, would pardon us for such a digression—but we shall content ourselves with barely referring to some passages of this sort, which seem to us to contain more exquisite beauties than the rest. Lib. III. 1 to 25. IV. 366, &c. V. 160, &c. &c. VIII. 273. XI. 268 to 285.

There are many beautiful metaphors, and other figures of speech, in this Book, which are too obvious to require any illustration ; the reader may see some of them quoted in Elements of Criticism, chap. 20th.—It may be further remarked, that there are certain poetical modes of expression which seem improperly to have received the appellation of figures—such as periphrasis—repetition—interrogation—and climax : the reader of taste will be at no loss to discern, that in the use of these our Poet is frequently very happy.

First

First Book, I shall now beg leave to be more particular upon this head.

The most rational definition of the term *sentiment*, seems to be that of the Author of *Elements of Criticism*, “ who appropriates “ it to such thoughts as are prompted by “ passion.” The reader who is versed in critical writings need not be informed—that beauty, grandeur, and sublimity, when applied to sentiments, are figuratively used—and that the application of such qualities to sentiments arises from a resemblance between the emotions produced by the latter, and objects of sight that possess the same qualities. Mr. Addison, in his excellent critique on the *Paradise Lost*, observes, “ that “ the sentiments in an epic Poem are the “ thoughts and behaviour which the author “ ascribes to the persons whom he introduces, and are just when conformable to “ their characters*.” The critics have laid it down as a rule, that the sentiments in an epic Poem should be natural and unaffected: nor is this enough; for we also expect to

* See Addison's Critique, and Dr. Blair's Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian.

find them abound in the sublime and the pathetic, though it has been justly remarked, at the same time, that the latter qualities suppose the existence of the former.

The variety of characters in the world will produce different modifications of the passions—and these of course will affect the sentiments to which they give birth : hence the following excellent rule, which is laid down by Lord Kaimes—“ That a passion be
“ adjusted to the character, the sentiments
“ to the passion, and the language to the
“ sentiments.”

These preliminary remarks and general rules, which we have extracted from critics of no mean reputation, will serve in a great measure to illustrate the several beauties of sentiment which we shall have occasion to point out in the First Book.

Satan having emerged from the fiery gulf, immediately breaks forth in the language of the utmost consternation and despair :

Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,
Said then the lost archangel ; this the seat
That we must change for Heav'n ? this mournful gloom
For that celestial light ?

But

But these feelings are instantly checked by
his pride and hatred :

Be it so, since he
Who now is sov'reign can dispose and bid
What shall be right ; farthest from him is best,
Whom reason hath equall'd, force hath made supreme
Above his equals.

These sentiments however are but of short
duration—for the recollection of former
happiness once more awakens all his sensi-
bilities.

Farewell happy fields,
Where joy for ever dwells.

This lasts but for a moment, and only
serves to sink him deeper into despair.

○ Hail horrors, hail
Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell
Receive thy new possessor.

And this sentiment tends but to render his
obstinacy and impenitence more deeply
rooted.

One who brings
A mind not to be chang'd by place or time.
The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heav'n of hell, a hell of heav'n.

Having

Having thus reconciled himself to his situation, he gives full scope to his daring ambition.

What matter where, if I be still the same,
 And what I should be, all but less than he
 Whom thunder hath made greater?
 Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
 To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell:
 Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.

It may be proper to remark here, that the acknowledgments which Satan makes of the omnipotence of the Supreme Being—humbling as they must have been to him—yet originated in pride; and we cannot but admire Milton's art in this respect, since, as Mr. Addison justly observes, “ that
 “ was the only consideration which could
 “ support his pride under the shame of his
 “ defeat.”

The foregoing quotations may shew what a great master of the passions Milton is;—but we should do him great injustice in this respect if we overlooked the following inimitable passage:

He now prepar'd
 To speak, whereat their doubled ranks they bend
 From wing to wing, and half inclose him round

H

With

With all his peers : attention held them mute.
 Thrice he assay'd, and thrice, in spite of scorn,
 Tears, such as angels weep, burst forth : at last
 Words, interwove with sighs, found out their way.

Though Milton shines very much in the beautiful, and in the pathetic, yet must it be allowed with Dr. Johnson, " that the " characteristic quality of his Poem is sub- " limity. He sometimes," adds the same great critic, " descends to the elegant, but " his element is the great. He can oc- " casionally invest him with grace, but his " natural port is gigantic loftiness. He can " please when pleasure is required, but it " is his peculiar power to astonish."

The First Book affords several fine strokes of that grandeur and sublimity of thought and sentiment, by which our author is distinguished.

Thus, when the chiefs of the fallen an- gels assemble together at the call of their great commander,

Forthwith from every squadron and each band
 The heads and leaders thither haste, where stood
 Their great commander ; god-like shapes and forms.
 Excelling human, princely dignities,
 And pow'rs that erst in heaven sat on thrones.

When they are represented as sitting in
council in Pandemonium :

But far within,
And in their own dimensions, like themselves,
The great seraphic lords and cherubim
In close recess and secret conclave sat,
A thousand demi-gods on golden seats,
Frequent and full.

The manner of illuminating Pandemonium:

From the arched roof,
Pendent by subtle magic, many a row
Of starry lamps and blazing cressets, fed
With Naphtha and Asphaltus, yielded light
As from a sky.

In the following passage we are at a loss
whether more to admire the astonishing sub-
limity of the thoughts, or the grandeur of
the diction :

He spake ; and to confirm his words out flew
Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs
Of mighty cherubim ; the sudden blaze
Far round illumin'd Hell : highly they rag'd
Against the Highest ; and fierce with grasped arms
Clash'd on their sounding shields the din of war,
Hurling defiance tow'rd the vault of Heav'n.

Though Milton's distinguishing talent be

to raise and elevate the mind, yet, as Dr. Johnson observes, " he sometimes descends " to the elegant ;"—and when he would convey to his readers the delightful emotions of gaiety and beauty, tenderness and love, he seldom fails to cloath his sentiments in all the harmony of melodious versification. The account of Thammuz, in the First Book, is distinguished for tenderness of passion and fine turns of expression.

Thammuz came next behind,
Whose annual wound in Lebanon allur'd
The Syrian damsels to lament his fate
In amorous ditties all a summer's day;
While smooth Adonis from his native rock
Ran purple to the sea, suppos'd with blood
Of Thammuz yearly wounded.

A few quotations from other parts of the Poem will sufficiently illustrate our position.

The pleasure which the bad angels felt at the result of their consultations is compared to the evening sun after a foul and stormy day.—The four first lines are quoted only to heighten the beauty of the succeeding, by the force of contrast.

As when from mountain-tops the dusky clouds
 Ascending, while the north-wind sleeps, o'erspread
 Heaven's chearful face, the louring element
 Scowls o'er the darken'd landskip snow, or shower ;
 If chance the radiant sun with farewell sweet
 Extend his evening beam, the fields revive,
 The birds their notes renew, and bleating herds
 Attest their joy, that hill and valley rings.

Lib. ii. 488.

No less beautiful in point of sentiment
 and versification is the following passage, in
 which the Poet alludes to his own blind-
 ness :

Then feed on thoughts that voluntary move
 Harmonious numbers ; as the wakeful bird
 Sings darkling, and in shadiest covert hid
 Tunes her nocturnal note. Thus with the year
 Seasons return ; but not to me return
 Day, or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn,
 Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
 Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine.

Lib. iii. 37.

In the description of Satan's metamorpho-
 sis into an angel of light, we have a fine
 picture of youthful beauty and angelic grace :

And now a stripling cherub he appears,
 Not of the prime, yet such as in his face
 Youth smil'd celestial, and to every limb

Suitable

Suitable grace diffus'd ; so well he feign'd :
Under a coronet his flowing hair
In curls on either cheek play'd ; wings he wore
Of many a colour'd plume sprinkled with gold.

Lib. iii. 636.

In the following passage, Satan arriving in the shape of a serpent at one of the most delightful spots in Paradise, where he had a view of Eve, is compared to a citizen walking abroad from the confinement of a town to taste rural pleasures ; and, indeed, the reading of it is enough (to make use of Milton's diction) " to inspire the heart with " vernal delight and joy—and to drive away " all sadness but despair."

As one who long in populous city pent,
Where houses thick and sewers annoy the air,
Forth issuing on a summer's morn to breathe
Among the pleasant villages and farms
Adjoin'd, from each thing met conceives delight,
The smell of grain, or tedded grass, or kine,
Or dairy ; each rural sight, each rural sound ;
If chance with nymph-like step fair virgin pass,
What pleasing seem'd, for her now pleases more,
She most, and in her look sums all delight.

Lib. ix. 445.

Of the same nature is the account which
Adam

Adam gives of his nuptials, to Raphael, his
heavenly guest :

To the nuptial bower

I led her blushing like the morn : all heaven
And happy constellations on that hour
Shed their selectest influence ; the earth
Gave sign of gratulation, and each hill ;
Joyous the birds ; fresh gales and gentle airs
Whisper'd it to the woods, and from their wings
Flung rose, flung odours from the spicy shrub,
Disporting, till the amorous bird of night
Sung spousal, and bid haste the evening-star
On his hill-top, to light the bridal lamp.

Lib. viii. 510.

An epic Poet ought to rest chiefly on the
sublimity or beauty of his thoughts, inde-
pendent of the ornaments of stile and ar-
rangement ; for it is certain, that no lofti-
ness of diction will convey greatness to a
sentiment that is vulgar or mean, and that
no elegance of expression will atone for the
want of it in the thought : it is necessary,
however, that the language of an epic Poem
be suited to the sentiments ; pompous dic-
tion, where perspicuity only is requisite,
becomes but so much bombast ; swelling
and long-winded allegories, and laboured
figures of speech, are equally improper to
express

Homer and Virgil are extremely happy in this respect, but particularly the former. Nor does Milton disdain this method of adorning his thoughts and sentiments: take the following instances from the First Book :

1. Seraphic arms and trophies, all the while
Sonorous metal blowing martial sounds.
2. Highly they rag'd
Against the Highest; and fierce with grasped arms
Clash'd on their sounding shields the din of war,
Hurling defiance tow'rd the vault of heaven.

The length of time in which Vulcan was falling from Heaven, is well expressed in the following passage:

Thrown by angry Jove
Sheer o'er the crystal battlements; from morn
To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve,
A summer's day.

The

The latter of the two following lines seems as unwieldy in its motion as the object it describes :

Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim th' ocean stream.

The dullest ear cannot be insensible to the beauty of the following passage :

But chief the spacious hall
Thick swarm'd, both on the ground and in the air,
Brush'd with the hiss of rustling wings.

We shall make no apology for inserting the two following passages from other parts of the Poem.

These lines are softer than the gentle zephyr :

Now gentle gales
Fanning their odoriferous wings dispense
Native perfumes, and whisper whence they stole
Those balmy spoils. *Lib. iv. 156.*

And sure never lover whispered in milder and more tender strains than the following :

Then with voice
Mild as when Zephyrus on Flora breathes,
Her hand soft touching, whisper'd thus : Awake,
My fairest, my espous'd, my latest found,
I Heaven's

Heaven's last best gift, my ever-new delight,
 Awake; the morning shines, and the fresh field
 Calls us; we lose the prime, to mark how spring
 Our tended plants, how blows the citron-grove,
 What drops the myrrh, and what the balmy reed,
 How nature paints her colours, how the bee
 Sits on the bloom, extracting liquid sweet.

Lib. v. 15.

It may be observed, that Milton is excellent in the arrangement of his words. It often produces a fine effect in Poetry to make a pause at the first or second syllable of a line—as for example in the following passage:

And now his heart

Distends with pride, and hard'ning in his strength,
 Glories—

Whoever has read Milton with attention will be at no loss to recollect many similar passages.

That Milton is in general very happy in adapting his language to his sentiments must be allowed—yet we cannot pretend to deny what Mr. Addison remarks upon this head, “ that his language is too much obscured
 “ by foreign idioms—that he often affects a
 “ kind of jingle in his words, and is too
 “ frequent

“ frequent in the use of technical terms ;” to which we may add, that he sometimes gives way to certain vulgarisms of expression, which are beneath the dignity of the epic strain—that he soars at times above the comprehension of ordinary readers, by adopting the nonsensical jargon of scholastic philosophy—and that he often sacrifices sentiment and harmony for the sake of displaying his extensive knowledge.

What can we call the following passage, but a mere muster-roll of names ?

And all who since, baptiz'd or infidel,
Jousted in Aspramont or Montalban,
Damasco, or Marocco, or Trebifond,
Next Chemos, th' obscene dread of Moab's sons,
From Aroar to Nebo, and the wild
Of southmost Abarim, in Hesebon
And Horonaim, Seon's realm,
And Eleale to th' Asphaltic pool,

To dwell upon the defects of a favourite author cannot be a pleasant task ; indeed, to be curious in picking out little faults and errors from so divine a work, might seem to imply a want of humanity and candour : Horace says, in the true spirit of criticism,

Verum ubi plura nitent in carmine, non ego paucis
Offendar maculis, quas aut incuria fudit,
Aut humana parum cavit natura.

And by way of apology for Milton, we may
say with Mr. Addison, " that our language
" sunk under him, and was unequal to that
" greatness of soul which furnished him
" with such glorious conceptions."



F I N I S.